

Atty. Docket No. 388.0002
Amendment Dated May 23, 2005
Reply to Office action of February 23, 2005
Appl. No. 10/758,194

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A conveyor system comprising:
 - (a) an inlet at a first select position;
 - (b) an outlet at a second select position which is different from the first select position;
 - (c) ~~a first endless conveying element having a contact surface and configured to transport at least one object along~~ a generally curvilinear transportation path disposed between said first select position and said second select position and in conveying communication from proximate the inlet to proximate the outlet;
 - (d) an endless conveying element to transport at least one object having a contact surface defining a portion of said curvilinear transportation path;
 - (e) a main guide element including a generally arcuate perimetric surface delineating a portion of said curvilinear transportation path; and
 - (f) a securing element [means for securing the] that positions at least one object ~~to on~~ the contact surface along ~~a secured portion of the~~ curvilinear transportation path.

2. (Currently Amended) The conveyor system of claim 1, wherein said secured portion of the transportation path includes a ~~substantially vertical portion~~ vertically directed component.

3. (Currently Amended) The conveyor system of claim 1, wherein the securing ~~means~~ element comprises a securing portion of the first endless conveying element having a securing surface configured to be moveable ~~to proximate~~ with the contact surface along a substantial portion of the transportation path, wherein the at least one object is positioned between the securing surface and the contact surface.

4. (Currently Amended) The conveyor system of claim 1, wherein the securing ~~means~~ element comprises a second endless conveying element having a securing surface and configured to maintain ~~its~~ a substantial portion of the securing surface ~~proximate~~ abutting the contact surface of the first endless conveying element for at least said secured portion, wherein the at least one object is positioned between the first conveying element and the second conveying element.

5. (Currently Amended) The conveyor system of claim 4, where said inlet and said outlet are separated by a select vertical distance and said inlet facing a first direction and said outlet facing a second, opposite direction and where said curvilinear transportation path is serpentine, further comprising ~~at least one~~ a second main guide element for directing the first and second endless conveying elements along said ~~secured portion of the~~ serpentine transportation path.

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6. (Currently Amended) The conveyor system of claim 5, wherein ~~the at least one~~ said first and said second main guide elements are separated by a select distance, wherein said main guide elements are generally cylindrical with substantially equivalent diameters, and wherein said vertical distance separating said inlet and outlet substantially corresponds to the sum of diameters of the first and second cylindrical guide elements and the distance of separation between the first and second main guide elements ~~comprises at least one main guide roller~~.

7. (Currently Amended) The conveyor system of claim 6, wherein the ~~at least one~~ first main guide element ~~comprises a~~ and second main guide roller element cooperate to maintain contact with the first and second endless conveying elements and to position said at least one object between the securing and said contact surfaces.

8. (Currently Amended) The conveyor system of claim ~~5~~1, wherein the main guide element comprises a plurality of rollers where the rollers maintain the registry of the at least one object between the input and the output.

9. (Original) The conveyor system of claim 8, wherein the plurality of rollers are each approximately the same size.

10. (Currently Amended) The conveyor system of claim 6, wherein the diameter of the main guide roller is approximately half said select vertical distance and provides

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a low bending force to said at least one object by being configured to be sufficiently large relative to the at least one object to avoid damaging the object .

11. (Original) The conveyor system of claim 1, further comprising a drive mechanism for driving the first endless conveying element.

12. (Original) The conveyor system of claim 11, wherein the drive mechanism is configured to drive the second endless conveying element at approximately the same speed as the first endless conveying element.

13. (Original) The conveyor system of claim 1, wherein the inlet is positioned proximate a first height and wherein the outlet is positioned proximate a second height which is different from said first height.

14. (Currently Amended) The conveyor system of claim 1, wherein the ~~secured portion is substantially curvilinear~~ endless conveying element and said securing element are elastic and sterilizable and formed from a material selected from the group consisting of belts, webs and cables.

15. (Currently Amended) A conveyor system comprising:

- (a) an inlet;
- (b) an outlet

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(c) a first endless conveying element having a sterilizable, unitary contact surface and configured to transport at least one object along a transportation path from proximate the inlet to proximate the outlet; and

(d) a second endless conveying element having a sterilizable, unitary securing surface positioned adjacent the contact surface along a secured portion of the transportation path so that the at least one object is secured between the first and second conveying elements, along the secured portion of the transportation path.

16. (Original) The conveyor system of claim 1, wherein said secured portion includes a substantially vertical portion.

17. (Original) The conveyor system of claim 15, further comprising a tensioner for maintaining tension in the first conveying element.

18. (New) The method of using a conveyor system of claim 1 comprising the steps of conveying the at least one article between said inlet and said outlet.

19. (New) The method of using a conveyor system of claim 15 comprising the steps of conveying the at least one article between said inlet and said outlet.

20. (New) A conveyor for food products, comprising:

a) means for receiving at least one food product in a select orientation, said receiving means being located at a first select height;

- b) means for dispensing said at least one food product in said select orientation said dispensing means being located at a second select height that is different from said first select height;
- c) means for establishing a curvilinear transport path between said receiving means and said dispensing means;
- d) means for conveying said at least one food product maintaining said select orientation between said means for receiving and said means for dispensing; and
- e) means for securing said at least one food product at least in respect to said curvilinear transport path, said means for securing overlapping said means for conveying along the curvilinear transport path.